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A Guide for Implementing Accreditation Standard 404.2: Materials Selection Policy

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Contents:	Page
Introduction and Outline	1
Sample Letters	4
Reconsideration Form	5
Teacher Rationale Form	6
Monforton School District's Policy	7
Dawson County High School's Policy	12
Checklist	20
Montana Resources	21

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Montana Office of Public Instruction
Ed Argenbright, Superintendent

Sheila Cates, Library Media Specialist
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SELECTION POLICY

Material in this document is designed to assist schools in developing an appropriate materials selection policy. Included here, in addition to the outline for a comprehensive selection policy, are a variety of sample forms referred to in the outline as well as the policies from Monforton and Dawson County High Districts.

The fourth edition of Standards for Accreditation of Montana Schools includes the following "Required" standard:

- 404.2 "Each school district shall have written policies regarding the selection, use and evaluation of materials and services and procedures for handling challenged materials. The selection and use of specific items of material, with the advice of the staff, are the responsibility of the local school board."

The above standard is located in the section of standards for "Library Media Services, K-12." Future editions of the Standards will expand 404.2 to include all instructional materials and curriculum areas as well as library media materials.

A written materials selection policy adopted and approved by the local Board of Trustees as part of its official policies is important for reasons other than the fact it is required to meet the Standards. One finding of a 1981 survey conducted by the Association of American Publishers, the American Library Association, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development was: "Administrators and Librarians reported that challenges to materials were more often overruled in schools with a formal selection policy." Another benefit of an approved comprehensive policy on selection of materials is that it provides school personnel a means to explain the school program to the community.

A comprehensive selection policy for instructional materials must consist of the following components:

Objectives:

1. Include a broad statement of the school district's goals for its educational program.
2. Specify the objectives of selection for:
 - a. library media center materials.
 - b. textbooks (objectives may vary from subject to subject).
 - c. other instructional materials.

Responsibility for Selection:

1. Name by professional position those who have responsibility for selection of library media materials, textbooks, and other instructional materials.
2. When selecting material to use in the classroom, teachers should develop a rationale for teaching a particular work/unit. (A sample rationale form is attached.) Such a process is essential to show the relationship between the work/unit and curriculum objectives as well as the school's philosophy and objectives. The process of developing a rationale is also an excellent public relations device to use with parents and the community to explain in a positive manner what is happening in the classroom.
3. Ultimate responsibility for selection rests, by law, with the local Board of Trustees.

Criteria:

Spell out the specific criteria used for selecting materials (i.e. literary or technical quality, appropriateness for age and grade level, accuracy, educational significance, authenticity, quality of format, favorable reviews in standard selection sources, etc.).

Procedures:

1. Describe all the steps in the selection process from the beginning to the final decision.
2. Include a partial list of selection aids/reviewing sources used.
3. List the types of materials acquired, why they are acquired, and how.
4. Specify the local policy regarding: weeding, replacing, and repairing materials.

Special Areas:

Detail local policy regarding the following: gifts, sponsored materials, professional materials, procedure for handling lost materials, etc.

Policies on Controversial Materials:

1. Draft a statement on intellectual freedom and why it should be upheld.
2. Endorse the principles in: the First Amendment, the American Library Association's (ALA) "Library Bill of Rights," and the National Council of Teachers of English's (NCTE) Students' Right to Read. (Attach copies of each to the complete policy.)

Reconsideration:

1. Establish the procedure for handling reconsideration of challenged materials.
2. Delineate every step from the initial response to the complaint through the highest appeal.

NOTE: Be sure the person challenging the material submits a written complaint. (Sample forms are attached.) Second, be sure the questioned material is not removed from the school pending the final decision from the review process.

Assistance in writing a policy or critiquing an existing one is available from the Library Media Specialist and the English Language Arts Specialist, Office of Public Instruction, Helena, MT 59620.

SAMPLE LETTER TO COMPLAINANT

Dear:

We appreciate your concern over the use of _____ in our school district. The district has developed procedures for selecting materials, but realizes that not everyone will agree with every selection made.

To help you understand the selection process, we are sending copies of the district's:

1. Instructional goals and objectives
2. Materials Selection Policy statement
3. Procedure for Handling Objections

If you are still concerned after you review this material, please complete the Request for Reconsideration of Material form and return it to me. You may be assured of prompt attention to your request. If I have not heard from you within two weeks, we will assume you no longer wish to file a formal complaint.

Sincerely,

Principal

INSTRUCTIONS TO EVALUATING COMMITTEE

Bear in mind the principles of the freedom to learn and to read and base your decision on these broad principles rather than on defense of individual materials. Freedom of inquiry is vital to education in a democracy.

Study thoroughly all materials referred to you and read available reviews. The general acceptance of the materials should be checked by consulting standard evaluation aids and local holdings in other schools.

Passages or parts should not be pulled out of context. The values and faults should be weighted against each other and the opinions based on the material as a whole.

Your report, presenting both majority and minority opinions, will be presented by the principal to the complainant at the conclusion of our discussion of the questioned material.

SAMPLE

School _____ Date _____

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF EDUCATIONAL MEDIA

Name of complainant _____

Address _____

Kind of media _____

Title _____ Author or
Producer _____

Reason for objection: (Cite particular sequences and approximate location in media.)

Specific objections:

Any merits noted in this media?

Have you read, viewed, and/or auditioned the entire material to which you object? _____

Have you read, viewed, and/or auditioned other media by this author or producer? _____

List titles previously examined: _____

What material on the same subject would you recommend for replacement?

Title _____	Author or Producer _____	Copyright Date _____
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Is your alternate selection in our library media center? _____

Signature _____

SAMPLE TEACHER RATIONALE

School:
Teacher:

Title:

Grade or Course:

Approximate date(s) book will be used:

This book will be studied by the whole class _____
recommended to individual students _____
part of a larger study of _____

Ways in which the book is especially appropriate for students in this class:

Ways in which the book is especially pertinent to the objectives of this course or unit:

Special problems that might arise in relation to the book and some planned activities which handle this problem:

Some other appropriate books an individual student might read in place of this book:

Prepared by Diane P. Shugert
Chair, NEATE Committee on the
Profession

From MONFORTON SCHOOL SELECTION POLICY

7.361 Library Philosophy and Objectives

The Monforton School Board believes that every school child has the right to a variety of learning materials within the school to broaden his interests and experiences and to stimulate his mental growth. The Board further believes that an effective and well-administered school library is the most effective and economical way to provide each child with exploratory experiences, reading guidance, instruction in the use of a variety of materials and curriculum enrichment.

7.362 Selection Policy

School libraries are concerned with generating understanding of American freedoms and with the preservation of these freedoms through the development of informed and responsible citizens.

The selection of library materials for Monforton School District is based on the principles expressed below:

To provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interests, abilities and maturity levels of the pupil served.

To provide materials that will stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and ethical standards.

To provide a background of information which will enable pupils to make intelligent judgments in their daily lives.

To provide materials on opposing sides of controversial issues so that young citizens may develop, under guidance, the practice of critical reading and thinking.

To provide materials representative of the many religious, ethnic, and cultural groups and their contributions to our American heritage.

To place principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudice in the selection of materials of the highest quality in order to assure a comprehensive collection appropriate for the users of the library.

Criteria for selection of new materials and weeding of existing materials will be based on:

1. Needs of the individual students
2. Needs of the curriculum
3. Requests of principal, students, teachers, and parents
4. Provisions of a wide range of materials on all levels of difficulty with a diversity of appeal and presentation of different points of view.
5. Aids used in choosing books:
 - A. Elementary School Library Collection
 - B. Children's Books Too Good To Miss
 - C. Books in Print
 - D. Children's Catalog
 - E. Bibliographies listed in textbooks adopted by the district.Materials not reviewed in standard sources are purchased only after careful examination.
6. Weeding:
 - A. When materials no longer meet the criteria for selection, they shall be weeded. Weeding is a necessary part of selection since every library will need to get rid of worn out, obsolete, dated or unappealing books.
 - B. Weeded books will be stamped "DISCARDED" and be used at the carnival in the spring.

SAMPLE LETTER TO COMPLAINANT

Dear :

We appreciate your concern over the use of _____ in our school district. The district has developed procedures for selecting materials, but realizes that not everyone will agree with every selection made.

To help you understand the selection process, we are sending copies of the district's:

1. Instructional Goals and Objectives
2. Materials Selection Policy statement
3. Procedure for Handling Objectives

If you are still concerned after you receive this material, please complete the Request for Reconsideration of Material form and return it to me. You may be assured of prompt attention to your request. If I have not heard from you within two weeks, we will assume you no longer wish to file a formal complaint.

Sincerely,

Principal

*(reprinted from the Academic Freedom Group Workshop Resource Book,
Spokane, September 1981.)*

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

Title _____ Book _____ Periodical _____ Other _____

Author _____

Publisher _____

Request initiated by _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Telephone _____

Do you represent:

_____ Yourself

_____ An organization (name) _____

_____ Other group (name) _____

1. To what in the work do you object? (Please be specific. Cite pages.) _____

2. Did you read the entire work? _____ If no, what parts? _____

3. What do you feel might be the result of reading this work? _____

4. For what age group would you recommend this work? _____

5. What do you believe is the theme of this work? _____

6. Are you aware of judgments of this work by literary critics? _____

7. What would you like your library/school to do about this work?

_____ Do not assign/lend it to my child.

_____ Return it to the staff selection committee/departement for reevaluation.

_____ Other. Explain _____

8. In its place, what work would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of the subject treated? _____

*(reprinted from the Academic Freedom
Group Workshop Resource Book,
Spokane, September 1981.)*

Signature _____

Date _____

INSTRUCTIONS TO EVALUATING COMMITTEE

Bear in mind the principles of the freedom to learn and to read and base your decision on these broad principles rather than on defense of individual materials. Freedom of inquiry is vital to education in a democracy.

Study thoroughly all materials referred to you and read available reviews. The general acceptance of the materials should be checked by consulting standard evaluation aids and local holdings in other schools.

Passages or parts should not be pulled out of context. The values and faults should be weighed against each other and the opinions based on the material as a whole.

Your report, presenting both majority and minority opinions, will be presented by the principal to the complainant at the conclusion of our discussion of the questioned material.

From DAWSON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL SELECTION POLICY

874.5

Book Selection Policy

The Board of Education, as representatives of a democracy who are governing a public school system, accept the following as their specific responsibility:

To provide learning situations in which constructive citizenship and democratic procedures may be experienced by pupils.

To provide qualified personnel to select materials.

To provide materials that will develop critical thinking, objective evaluations, and aesthetic appreciation suitable to their maturity level and abilities of pupils.

To meet this responsibility, a well-defined policy is both necessary and desirable. The Dawson County High School Board accepts final authority for the determination of policy in the selection and acquisition of materials for the school.

Philosophical Basis

One of the objectives of universal free education is to develop in children the intellectual capacities required for the effective exercise of the rights and duties of citizenship. Experience demonstrates that this is best accomplished in an atmosphere of free inquiry and discussion which is, in turn, supported by effective selection and use of instructional materials.

General Guidelines

Instructional materials, which include texts, books, nonprint items, magazines and newspapers, should make available to students in their classes and in school libraries a wide range of ideas. Material should never be excluded or removed simply because it expresses unpopular or controversial views or because it coincides with particular religious views. The requirement of diversity, however, does not mandate a presentation of any particular point of view or theory unless necessary to a fair and balanced presentation of the subject.

The best method for selecting teaching materials is to give final authority to teachers who make selections on the basis of their professional competence in consultation with supervisors. Recommendations from students, parents, school boards, and other citizens should be taken into account. In addition to their suitability for particular subject matters, materials should take into account the student's age and present a variety of views. Professional responsibility includes continually reviewing old materials and seeking new materials.

Media materials should present the multiple realities of a pluralistic society, including fiction and nonfiction which portray the many facets of life.

Criteria For Selection

1. Overall purpose
2. Timeliness or permanence
3. Importance of the subject matter
4. Quality of the writing/production
5. Readability and popular appeal
6. Authoritativeness
7. Professional reputation of the publisher/producer
8. Professional reputation and significance of the author/artist/composer
9. Format and price
10. Suitability to intended audience
11. Requests from community citizens, faculty, and students
12. Use of nonsexist, racially, ethnically, and politically unbiased material

Procedures for Selection of Resources

In selecting resources for use, school personnel evaluate the existing resources and consult:

1. Reputable, unbiased, professionally prepared selection aids.
2. Specialists from departments and/or grade levels.

In specific areas, school personnel follow these procedures:

1. Resources given as gifts are judged by basic selection standards and are accepted or rejected by these standards.
2. Multiple items, outstanding and much-in-demand resources are acquired as needed.
3. Worn or missing standard resources are replaced periodically.
4. Out-of-date or no longer useful resources are withdrawn.
5. Sets of resources and resources acquired by subscription are examined carefully and are acquired only to fill a definite need.
6. Resources may be acquired from publishers' catalogs, bookstores, and public or private collections as long as the resources meet the criteria for selection which have been outlined above.
7. Whenever possible, material should be previewed before purchase.

School Media Center

In addition to the obligation to include a wide range of ideas and interpretations in materials in the school media center, the library also has an affirmative duty to provide access to materials to students. Appropriate reasons for limiting access to media materials to particular individuals might include past destruction of such materials, failure to pay fines, or inappropriate behavior within the confines of the media center.

Sources of selection materials, although not confined to this alone, include such standard sources as BOOKLIST, SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL, KLIATT YOUNG ADULT PAPERBACK GUIDE, STANDARD HIGH SCHOOL CATALOG. All recommendations from parents, students, teachers, board members, administration, and community members will receive full consideration within the limits of the criteria for selection and procedures for selection noted above.

Materials Violating Personal Consciences

While the determination of the educational effectiveness of instructional materials is the responsibility of officials of the school system, students or parents have the right to object to exposing their children to any particular piece of assigned instructional materials as offensive to them on grounds of individual conscience. Though such considerations may not be used to justify banning the schoolwide or systemwide use of materials, parental objections to use of particular materials by their children should be respected when reasonable and made in good faith. Where feasible, alternative materials should be made available to those students who wish to exercise their rights of conscience.

874.6

Complaint Procedures

Criticism of books and material selected and advocacy of additional material is an essential right of students, parents, faculty, and the community. Objection to the particular language or viewpoint of material cannot, per se, be justification for the exclusion of classroom or library material. Material objected to may not be withdrawn while the objection is being reviewed.

Occasional objections to resources will be made despite the care and procedures followed in their selection. Therefore, school personnel should be prepared to defend the principle of the freedom to read, the professional responsibility of the staff, and the resources themselves.

If a complaint is made (a complaint is defined as a verbal or written statement of opposition to a resource, requesting that it be removed or restricted), the procedures are as follows:

1. Treat each complaint courteously and confidentially, but make no commitments.
2. Each complainant should be directed to the building principal.
3. The building principal will invite the complainant to complete and return the prepared questionnaire.
4. The completed questionnaire will be submitted by the principal to the chairperson of the review committee.
5. The review committee shall be a standing committee consisting of the librarian or A-V specialist, department heads from English, science, social studies, and the principal, vice-principal, and a parent. The building principal, the superintendent and the professional media person or teacher involved will be promptly informed of the completed questionnaire.

6. Use of challenged resources shall not be restricted during the reevaluation proceedings.
7. The chairperson of the review committee will:
 - a) notify committee members of the challenge and set up meetings.
 - b) discuss the questionnaire with the professional media person or teacher involved.
 - c) obtain reviews of the resources being challenged.
 - d) inform the complainant and the media person or teacher involved of the time and place of the committee meeting.
8. The review committee will:
 - a) examine resources referred to it.
 - b) check general acceptance of the resources through reviews.
 - c) weigh values and faults against each other and form opinions based on the resource as a whole.
 - d) meet to discuss the resource, to review the complainant's objections, to make a decision by public vote, and to prepare a report on it.
 - e) send copies of the report to the complainant, the building principal, superintendent, and the professional media person or teacher involved. This report will reflect the decision of the committee.
9. Should the complainant not be satisfied with the decision of the committee, he/she may direct the complaint to the superintendent who shall review the complaint and the committee report and inform the complainant of his decision.

Should the complainant not be satisfied with the decision of the superintendent, he/she may request a review by the board of trustees. The complaint, committee report, and superintendent's report shall be made available to the board of trustees. The matter will be discussed at the next regularly scheduled board of trustees' meeting and a decision given to the complainant.

DAWSON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL
Glendive, Montana
TEXTBOOK SELECTION CRITERIA

TITLE _____

COURSE _____ TEACHER(S) _____

1. Reading Level
2. Illustrations
 - Pictures (Photos)

 - Graphs (Charts)

 - Maps
3. Data (is it up to date)
4. Print (size of type)
5. Construction
 - Paper (quality)
 - Binding (strength)
 - Cover (attractive - strength)
6. Supplementary Materials
 - Workbooks
 - Audio-Visuals
 - Films
 - Filmstrips
 - Records (cassettes)
 - Lab materials
7. Bibliographies
8. Author Bias

DAWSON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL
Glendive, Montana

BOOK SELECTION

Teacher's Rationale

Teacher _____

Title _____

Grade or Course _____

Approximate date(s) book will be used _____

This book will be studied by the whole class _____

recommended to individual students _____

part of a larger study of _____

Ways in which the book is especially appropriate for students in this class:

Ways in which the book is especially pertinent to the objectives of this course
or unit:

Special problems that might arise in relation to the book and some planned
activities which handle this problem:

Some other appropriate books an individual student might read in place of this book:

DAWSON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL
REQUEST FORM FOR REEVALUATION OF RESOURCES

Initiated by _____ Date _____

Address _____ Telephone _____

REPRESENTING:

Self _____ Organization or Group _____
(Name)

RESOURCE QUESTIONED:

Author _____

Title _____

Publisher _____ Copyright Date _____

Type of Resource _____
(book, film, filmstrip, record, pamphlet, etc.)

Location: Elementary _____ Jr. High School _____ Sr. High School _____

Please respond to the following questions. If sufficient space is not provided, please use an additional sheet of paper.

1. Have you seen, read, or listened to this resource in its entirety? _____
2. To what do you object? Please cite specific passages, pages, etc.

3. Why are these parts objectionable to you?

4. What do you feel might result from use of this resource?
5. What reviews of this resource have you read?
6. For what other age group might this resource be suitable?
7. What action do you recommend that the school take on this resource?
8. What resource do you recommend in place of this one that would provide adequate information on the subject?

(Date)

(Signature)

CHECKLIST FOR MATERIALS SELECTION POLICY

1. Do you have a written instructional materials selection policy?
2. Has it been formally adopted by your governing agency?
3. Is it reviewed and updated periodically?
4. Are the following basic components included in your selection policy?
 - A. Statement of philosophy concerning selection of instructional materials
 - B. Objectives of system and goals of instructional program
 - C. Responsibility - those persons (named by professional position) responsible for selection of instructional materials
 - D. Criteria used in selection of materials (policy should cover all instructional materials, both print and nonprint)

Examples of criteria are: relevance to objectives; format; appropriateness to level of user; artistic and literary excellence; content; superiority in treatment of controversial issues; cost and other related factors.

- E. Procedures for selection - describe all steps from initial screening to final selection
- F. Special areas - include procedures for handling gifts, special requests, etc.
- G. Reconsideration - written procedure for handling challenged materials

Five Questions to Ask Yourself

1. Does the school follow written policy statements on basic goals, principles, procedures and practices?
2. Do policy statements in the school include procedures for handling complaints?
3. Do all employees know, understand and implement those policy statements?
4. Does the school reach into every corner of the community to involve a cross section of its people in planning, program development and reporting?
5. Are there two-way communications between the school and the community, with listening as well as talking on all sides at all times?

MONTANA RESOURCES FOR MATERIAL SELECTION INFORMATION

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Sheila Cates, Library Media Specialist

or

Claudette Johnson, English Language Arts Specialist
State Capitol

Helena, Montana 59620

1-800-332-3402

MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AND
LANGUAGE ARTS

504 South California

Helena, Montana 59601

MONTANA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

P. O. Box 5081

Missoula, Montana 59801

MONTANA COALITION FOR INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

P. O. Box 5731

Helena, Montana 59604

